

SHEILA VACULIK

Proponent Testimony – SB 67

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairman Bacon and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in front of you today. My daughter Sierah was a victim of a repeat violent offender. Sierah was entering her junior year at the University of Toledo; she was on the Dean's List every year and academically on her way to graduate with honors. She was inducted into the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and an active member of Alpha Kappa Psi professional business fraternity. Apart from being a full-time student she also volunteered her time at the YMCA Big Brother Big Sister program.

Sierah had recently accepted an internship with Ice Industries for the summer and she was looking forward to studying abroad in the fall. She was great at multi-tasking and planning; actually, she was in the process of planning our next family movie night. The last voice message I have is her trying to get a head count for The Secret Life of Pet's movie. The whole family, all thirteen of us, were eager for Wednesday night to come. Wednesday night came, just not at all how we thought we would be spending it as a family. Instead of watching a movie, we watched road closed signs go up, bright yellow caution tape not allowing us to enter and police car after police car lined the streets with search parties going in and out of the corn fields. We watched all of this from my parent's porch wondering how this happened so close to our home.

Tuesday July 19, 2016, on a warm sunny evening, Sierah left on a bicycle ride to her boyfriend's house. I took our youngest daughter to Tae Kwon Do and my husband took our son to his 4-H meeting. Each of us going in different directions which was our normal, until I received a phone call at 10:00 pm from Josh, her boyfriend asking if Sierah was home because she was not answering her phone. When we discovered that she was not home and her bike was not in the barn I was overcome with panic. I cannot begin to describe the gut wrenching, take your breath away emotions that my family went through and continue to go through.

As Sierah's mother I knew there was something seriously wrong and time was of the essence. We called 911 and reported her missing. We drove ditches, put messages out on Facebook, and even called for some favors. Within hours, the K-9 unit was out and her bike was found. Soon the quiet of the night was filled with the sound of Promedica's Air Mobile and the spotlight lit up the sky. The sex offender registry that was put into place by legislators worked just like it was meant to that night. Law enforcement had contact with the offenders in our area, within hours after Sierah went missing. But unfortunately, the man indicted for this crime was not on any list or registry.

Sierah's attacker is no stranger to law enforcement. July 4th 1990, in an extremely similar incident, a bicyclist was riding on a country road when Mr. W violently assaulted her. He was found guilty of abduction in Lucas County Common Pleas Court and sentenced 5-10 years, of which he only served 3. In October 2000, he was back in jail for growing marijuana which he served almost 2 years of the 3-year sentence he was given. I can't help wonder what might have happened if we would have had the violent offender registry in place.

I respectfully ask your consideration be given to add a violent offender registry to the current registries already in place in the State of Ohio. Sex offenders and even arson offenders are easily visible to law enforcement, but not violent offenders. I ask you, WHY?

These violent offenders are already in our communities, living amongst our children and near our schools; registering for a crime you consciously committed just makes you accountable for your actions. By simply changing legislation to force convicted violent criminals to register, we CAN save lives. We can equip law enforcement with the tools they need to identify predators within those crucial moments when a crisis occurs. We can change the outcome of other violent crimes. We can spare others the pain my family has endured. We can honor Sierah and her life.

I am only asking that this be considered so the ending may be different for the next family. Adding violent offenders to a registry that is already in place and making a difference just seems right. I can't help but wonder if Sierah's story would have had a much different ending if the police would have had access to such a registry that early Wednesday morning in July 2016.

Would my daughter have been found Wednesday alive instead of Friday in a shallow grave 7 miles from our home? I will never know the answer to that question and that is the subject of my nightmares.